

March 13, 2014

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

RAISED BILL 5500: AN ACT CONCERNING PROVIDER AUDITS UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM.

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee,

I want to thank you for this opportunity to address H.B. 5500. I am Mary Moran Boudreau, writing on behalf of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, the only oral health advocacy organization in Connecticut with the vision of "Oral Health for All."

Connecticut Oral Health Initiative urges you to pass this bill as we have a strong concern about the impact on access to oral care for our low-income residents in Connecticut. The current environment of random audits by the Department of Social Services (DSS) are causing undo stress upon the dental community and we fear it will result in a number of dentists withdrawing from the program, and fewer Medicaid-enrolled children and families having access to quality care.

With the changes to Dental Medicaid made in 2006, the number of dentists participating in the Medicaid program increased from under 300 in 2006 to over 1800 today. The results are seen in the increase in utilization of Medicaid-enrolled children from 46% in 2006 to almost 70% in 2013. Most importantly, the data collected by the Department of Public Health reports that:

1. There are significant oral health disparities in CT with minority and low-income children having the highest level of dental disease.
2. Compared to 2006-2007, fewer children have untreated decay and more minority children have dental sealants.
3. Connecticut met the Healthy People 2010 objectives for reducing the prevalence of decay experience and untreated tooth decay among elementary school children, but did not meet the Healthy People 2010 objective for increasing the prevalence of dental sealants.¹

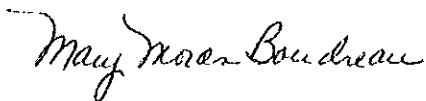
We still need to make strides in the utilization of the services by people of color in the areas of preventive and therapeutic care in Connecticut.

It is unfortunate when some providers perpetrate fraud and abuse within the Medicaid program, and we agree with the need for the DSS to audit practitioners. However, the current random audit system is placing hardships on all providers who provide Medicaid services, including those who do not demonstrate any unusual billing practices, and who might strongly consider withdrawing from the Medicaid program as result of undue scrutiny. It is the issue of dental practices not knowing what is expected that may cause dentists to withdraw from providing care to our neediest citizens.

We believe that, in the interest of this program's continued success in providing services to Connecticut's citizens, a moratorium should be placed on random audits until the DSS makes these audits effective, transparent, and as fair as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and your commitment to the health and oral health of Connecticut residents.

Sincerely,



Mary Moran Boudreau, Executive Director

¹ Connecticut Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Health. Every Smile Counts, The Oral Health of Connecticut's Children, Hartford, Connecticut, October 2012. http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/oral_health/pdf/oral_health_ct_2012_rev.pdf